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ABSTRACT

The ascendance of Menudo, the Puerto Rican rock group, was the most significant cultural event in the Hispanic community in the last eight years. As a phenomenon of popular culture, Menudo is worthy of study because of its main audience (Hispanic) and because it illustrates the dialectical interplay of gender, class, Hispanic ethnicity, and economic exploitation within modern capitalism. One strong feature of Menudo was the speed with which fans learned of its concerts and obtained Menudo-inspired products, such as buttons. Another phenomenon was how it affected the Spanish language. Because the newspaper "Las Noticias del Mundo" printed a daily Menudo column, thousands of young Hispanic girls began to buy it and thus learned much Spanish. Many girls formed "mini-Menudo groups," and case study of one of these, "Las Formulas," raised a number of questions. What is revealed, for example, by the fact that the group's members were girls who imitate Menudo, thus using Hispanic men as role models? Another dimension to the Menudo phenomenon was internationalization, as the group's enthusiastic reception in Latin and Central America both affirmed U.S. Hispanics' increased cultural pride and led to cross-national identification with Hispanic women elsewhere. Unlike other music groups popular in the United States, Menudo was originally a Spanish language production with a strong appeal to Hispanic identity. But like the others, Menudo was made possible by a process of capital accumulation and economic exploitation. Ironically, as the American mainstream media attempt to adapt Menudo to a non-Hispanic audience, the band's appeal to its original audience, Hispanic women, appears to be on the wane. (KH)

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MENUDO: ITS IMPACT ON HISPANIC IDENTITY

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INTRODUCTION *

What is the Menudo phenomenon? Menudo is a group of five Puerto Rican rock singers who were, and to some extent still are, very popular in the Hispanic communities in the U. S. and in Central and Latin America. The following (somewhat dramatized) account conveys, however, more of the essence of Menudo, particularly for young Hispanic women.

"Bigger than the Beatles" said -- of all people -- Mayor Koch of NYC...Broke all records at the Felt Forum...3 killed in stampede concert in Mexico...mobs tying up traffic at the airport...a key to the city is presented to Menudo...5000 girls mob City Hall for a glimpse of Menudo...ABC is interested...Hollywood calls...Menudo buttons...menudo mania!!!!!!!!!(1)

A new term enters the Spanish-English vocabulary "menuditis" meaning an illness that afflicts young girls wherein all other activities are secondary to Menudo activities. Associated symptoms are fainting, yelling, screaming, and moaning in long, loud wails whenever in the electrical or actual presence of the Menudo group.

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* I am indebted to the following people for their comments on an earlier draft, Samir Amin, Gelvin Stevenson, and Lourdes Torres.

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There is no remedy. Treat symptoms by acquiring Menudo paraphernalia; for specialty Menudo goods go to the "Menuditis" store on E. 22 St. It is also advisable to attend Menudo concerts, and to expose the afflicted to Menudo TV programs. Although there is no known cure, it is expected to diminish wih age if contacted early; there is no hope for later victims. It is suspected that atmospheric changes contribute to the disease. With increased attention to defense expenditures,, it is expected that the disease will subside in incidence.

The private sector has expressed interest in the problem. It plans to adulterate the phenomena and thus dilute its negative effects on young girls. Hollywood processing is expected to radically alter the shape, form and substance of the group, thereby making it more palatable to non-Hispanic tastes. This should attentuate the symptoms currently observed. It is anticipated that White women will not be affected by the same disease. In fact, we may obliterate the disease entirely in this fashion.

WHY ANALYZE MENUDO?

1. Menudo is popular culture. Popular culture is most often the culture of the working class. Yet popular culture generally receives little serious, analytical attention.

2. Menudo was the most significant cultural event in the Hispanic community in the last 8 years, affecting larger numbers of the community than any other event. Put another way, it would be difficult to find a member of the Hispanic community who did

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not know about Menudo.

3. Menudo penetrated the mainstream media network, contrary to most other cultural events in the Hispanic community.(2)

4. Menudo had an international cast, i.e ., there were Menudo phenomena occurring in other Central and Latin American countries,

5. Menudo appealed mainly to Hispanic women who, by virtue of economic position, are the most oppressed of the oppressed.(3)

6. lastly, but perhaps most importantly, because Menudo illustrates the dialectical and interplay of gender, class, hispanicity, and economic exploitation within modern day capitalism.

COMMUNICATION WITHOUT FORMAL "NETWORKS"

The Menudo phenomena hit the press and the Hispanic community quickly and strongly. Without formalized information networks, the Menudo fans (thousands of them) knew when Menudo was coming, where they would be and what they would be producing next. Madison Square Garden spent weeks telling thousands of callers they had no information on when Menudo was to appear, and therefore could not sell tickets. The Menudo fans and the fan clubs knew they were coming, they kept calling. Finally a recording was put in place. Even with extensions on the number of

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concert days, the concerts were soldout in three days time. Fans had been lined up from 3:00 in the morning and the line went for blocks. Menudo tickets for the Menudo concert were selling on the street for $90 a piece. And they were purchased by people without a lot of money.

FAST, MASS-PRODUCED IDENTITY SYMBOLS

Menudo buttons appeared on the street. "I love Menudo," "I love Miguel," or "Charlie," or "Ricky," "Johnny," or "Xavier" -- pronounded "Savier" not Havier because that was how it was "supposed" to be pronounced, that was the way his mother intended it. 99 Menudo buttons were counted on one young woman. Six to eight buttons down the side of the pants was "cool" and common. Menudo buttons were precious possessions, guarded, stolen, given only as gifts of love...mainly between women. These prominently and proudly displayed buttons silently communicated the Hispanic woman's love for and pride in <u>their</u> group. Every Menudo button that was seen on the street mutiplied the declaration (intended or not) of Hispanic pride and identity.

Buttons proliferated. Age was irrelevant to the wearing of Menudo buttons, from 6 month olds in baby carriages to 96 year olds at concerts sported Menudo buttons. Suprising was the adoption (in some working class or Black areas) of Menudo buttons by non-Hispanics. Also surprising was the introduction of "I hate Menudo" buttons, often worn, interestingly enough, by Hispanic boys. The buttons were but the leaders in the (now typical) marketing blitz that follows "hot" commodities.(5)

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Modern day capitalism now has the ability to quickly mass produce "symbolic" commodities through mere imprinting. These mass-produced identity goods facilitated the spread of the Menudo phenomena. Everything was Menudo, you could wear menudo boots, pants, tee shirts, hat, belts, bags, key chains, jackets, neck chains, sunglasses, pocketbooks. The more you had, the better you felt.

In the barrio exchange of goods-for-money there was also often present a warming, knowing smile that communicated affirmation of cultural pride between buyer and seller. But just as the cultural coffers of Hispanic seller and buyer were filled, so too were the pockets of the ...ting entrepeneurs.

THE INVISIBLE NETWORK

But this type of teeny-bopper phenomena is not too surprising. What is surprising is the speed with which information moved in what, heretofore, had been perceived as a quiescent and privatized community when it came to rock music. Information about the available Menudo goods, whether material products or artistic performances permeated all circuits, all ages, generations, boros, and neighboring states. Women came to know that Menudo belts were now available, that Menudo would be coming back into New York in June, often before public confirmation or actual availability of the goods. It was the greatest organization of word-of-mouth passage of information ever experienced. Fan clubs were developed overnight and flowered beyond their own abilities to handle requests for membership. It

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was a display of lightening communication without formal networks.(6)

THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

Among the more dramatic developments that directly resulted from the Menudo phenomena was the development of Spanish -language readership. Las Noticias Del Mundo a little known paper (owned by Rev. Moon, but published without reference to the Unification Church) increased its circulation dramatically. Young girls who had never read or studied Spanish were buying a copy of Las Noticias Del Mundo so that they could read the one Menudo article that appeared every day.(7) Working their way through the article they learned more Spanish than they could acquire in a year's school work. They were interested.

The articles often had the texts of the songs recently released. So the fans learned the songs in this fashion. The debates that occurred on the correct pronunciation of Spanish words were rivaled in intensity only by the Israel-Palestinian debaters. Second and third generation Hispanic girls who had spoken little Spanish before now became fluent and educated in the cultural images of the island, e.g., "El Coqui," "Cielito Lindo", a song of Mexican origin became identified as Puerto Rican because it was sung by Menudo. How did they know El Mundo or specific English and Spanish language magazines had articles on Menudo? Word of mouth is the only explanation.

It is important to bear in mind that the Menudo phenomena was distinctive from the Beatles or other teenage crazes because

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it was initially a totally Spanish-language production. The members of the original Menudo group spoke English hesitatingly. While many of their fans spoke Spanish hesitatingly. Yet they were idols. The original members had minimal experience in the U.S., although a number had been born in the U.S Why did they appeal with such strength and intensity to the Hispanic woman in New York? Chicago? New Jersey? Conneticut? It would appear that by embracing Menudo, Hispanic women were embracing an affirmation of their cultural heritage (albeit redefined). Did we view, in this affirmation, the seeds of revolt against an oppressive ideology (and system) that attempts to homogenize and standardize (national) minorities? Was the Menudo phenomena an antithetical reaction to cultural hegemony?

MINI-MENUDO GROUPS: LAS FORMULAS

But what is perhaps the most important, and also the least well-known and least anticipated, reaction to Menudo was the spontaneous creation of hundreds of mini Menudo groups. These mini-Menudo groups sang and danced the Menudo songs in local talent shows in the barrios of New York. The following is a case study of one such group: The Formulas. Based on my experience, with other similar gruops, I think they typify the experiences of many other similar groups; they illustrate the spontaneous generation of talent and energy that was part of the Menudo phenomenon.

I first saw the Formulas in professional action, when I went to the Teatro Puerto Rico -- a long-time, established movie

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house in the South Bronx that generally showed Spanish movies and some variety acts. When I arrived the place was buzzing with excitement. It was being whispered that 122 -- yes, one hundred and twenty two groups -- were to perform that day. (This was in March of 1983, before the mayor of New York realized the political rewards to be gained from gifting this new Latin group with a key to the city.)

I marveled, where do 122 groups come from? There was no advertising for this try-out. Groups selected at this try-out would perform in a subsequent show. From whence did so much talent spring? How did they get here? How did they find out abut it? How did they organize themselves for this endeavor? How did they come to think of themselves as capable of standing in front of a theatre-size audience and performing?

Each group consisted of about five girls, a few groups had more, a few groups had less. That meant there had arisen, without encouragement, publicity, or leadership that I could detect (122 x 5) 610 young working class women who were saying by virtue of their presence at the theatre that day, that they wanted to and felt they could, perform on stage in honor of their idols. How had this come to be?

I reflected on the group I had come with. Five girls (11-12 years of age) who knew each other as friends because they all attended a parochial school in the most devastated (in term of housing and population loss) area of the South Bronx. They had decided they wanted to have a group. They came up with their name: "Las Formulas" from a Menudo song. They came up with the idea for their costumes. They rehearsed their dance steps,

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improvising the choreography from their viewing of the Menudo group on TV and in concerts.

They then dragooned a still single (and therefore with some free time) aunt of one of the girls to be their "manager." The "manager" did very little in terms of teaching the kids. The "manager" was an adult who could represent them to the talent scout, when necessary. Despite the presence of the "manager" it was the members of "Las Formulas" who were the ones who "found out" about the next talent show; who came up with costume ideas; and who worked out their routines and perfected their singing.

Most of the other groups were from public schools and had what appeared to be greater family ties within the groups. The other groups ranged in age from 6-17. Most groups, including The Formulas, lip sang the Menudo songs that they brought with them. Howver, the girls' voices could generally be heard above the recorded voices of the Menudo grou . The same democratic style of switching leads was incorporated into the mini-Menudo groups' style. Similar, but sometimes very different dance steps were developed. The performance was not an imitation of the Menudo group in this regard, it was a distinct performance, taking off on the Menudo performance. As a matter of fact, each group was evaluated by the other groups performing on the extent to which they performed not just well, but uniquely.

The Formulas' name was well-chosen; they had the formula, for they went on to win first prize at a subsequent show. In the process of rehearsing and performing they refined their musical acuity with regard to musical notes, their awareness of the quality of electronic recordings, their self-discipline, their

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dance and voice synchronization, their stage presence and their general awareness of the workings (and learnings) in show biz. All this without any teachers or trainers.

Most of the other groups were good too. There were a handful of all male groups, all older than the average age of the girl groups. (They were pursued as Menudo fill-ins by the girls during intermission.) Athough the overwhelming majority of the groups in the show were mini-Menudo groups, it was here that I first saw the electric boogey and some brake dancing later to move to Hollywood. There were also, in other shows I attended subsequently guest spots for non-Menudo type soloists.

THE ROLE OF GENDER

Not only was the development of the mini-Menudo group phenomena quite distinctive in that it represented a very <u>active</u> response, but it also represented a unique gender response. Why did Hispanic <u>women</u> use Hispanic <u>men</u> as role models? Women loved Elvis and they loved the Beatles, but they didn't try to be like them. Interestingly enough, the girls in the groups often referred to each other by the name of their special Menudo idol. When they sang songs recorded by a particular Menudo, they were that Menudo; that song was to be performed by the girl-Miguel, or the girl-Charlie. Does this reflect a new gender open-ness? an androgenous approach? Why did the women form the groups in the main? Obviously more research is needed on these questions. They are raised at this point to underscore the difference between Latinas' reactions to Menudo and previous crazes.

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ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

Although the spirit and strength of these young women was impressive, they did not by themselves account for the phenomena. There was money to be made; Menudo fever could be further exploited. The organizers of the talent shows charged for participation in the shows. The audiences (who consisted in large part of friends and family of the participants) also paid entrance fees. Commissary goods were sold, as were the Menudo regalia, "autographed" pictures, and other commodities associated wih Menudo. Unfortunately, it seemed to me there was more interest in making money than in discovering or creating talent. There were no hookups to Broadway outlets, to schools of acting, dancing, or to agents, etc. (There was not even a hook-up to the corporate Menudo organzation.) The main prizes tended to be symbolic, or tickets to the next Menudo concert. But these were apparently enough.

AN INTERNATIONAL CAST

There was another dimension to the Menudo phenomena that deserves attention and speaks to the question of class, race, oppression and gender. That was internationalization. Due mainly to the creative use of the means of cultural production, it was possible for the NY fans to see that women in other Central and Latin American countries were interested in their favorite group. It was reported (and subsequently seen on televised broadcasts)

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that Menudo had played to packed stadiums (of sometimes over 100,000 people) in a multitude of Latin and Central Amerian countries. Film coverage of thousands of swarming menuditis-afflicted girls in these various countries was broadcast to the fans in NY. The enthusiastic reception give to the "ambassadors" of (Puerto Rican) good will and good entertainment were highlighted on the Spanish language TV stations. This, by the way, was the only and perhaps first time that these pedominantly second generation young girls tuned into Spanish language stations. The "international" acclame of the Menudo group was not lost on the US Hispanic audience. It further affirmed the cultural pride that the group had generated amongst the Hisparics in the U. S. Thus, television conveyed international recognition, which validated Puerto Rican and Hispanic identity in the U. S.

SUMMARY: THE IMPACT STATEMENT

Thus, the Menudo phenomena can be said to have legitimately generated the following among large numbers of Hispanic young women:

* increased use of spoken (or sung) Spanish
* increased literacy in Spanish
* increased circulation of Spanish-language papers and magazines
* increased identification with Hispanic cultural traditions and increased cultural pride

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* cross-national identification with Hispanic women in Central and Latin America

* the development of highly efficent informal and formal (in the case of talent shows, fan clubs) communication links between Hispanics, especially Hispanic women)

* increased knowledge and proficient usage of electronic media, e. g., tapes, records, videos, films, and photography

* the spontaneous creation of a multitud of independent, highly energized and organized musical groups (with all the attendant learnings involved of choreography, costume, design, discipline, voice training, and organizational and management skills).

In addition, Menudo triggered in the <u>larger</u> Hispanic community a sense of pride and positive accomplishment. In many minds, the group's success was identified with the possibility of success for all Hispanics -- as Hispanics. Very simply, Menudo's success indicated Hispanics were not all failures. That a Hispanic could succeed in a context where most Hispanics do not succeed. Hispanics liked Menudo; attention by the mainstream media press further reinforced their liking for Menudo and their pride in Menudo's accomplishment.

There was an interesting dialectic at work between Hispanic women and Menudo -- as one young girl said on TV (as she waited to catch a glimpse of her idols) "they make me feel proud." And another said, "I feel that when they move, they're telling me that they love me." Someday (if it hasn't already been done) someone may psycoanalyze the reaction of working class Hispanic

women to Menudo. They may find that this clean-cut, well-mannered but fun-loving and princely group of teen age men spoke to the sexual fantasies of young and/or prepubescent girls. They may also find that Menudo's soft fusion of American rock and traditional Hispanic words and feelings appealed to unresolved identity issues in Hispanic women. Whatever, the underlying psychological causes of the Menudo phenomena and Hispanic women, the fact remains that tens of thousands of Hispanic women are more Hispanic today because of the Menudo phenomena.

It is perhaps important to reflect, within a larger context, on the significance of the reactions to Menudo. Hispanic women of all ages, but mainly the young 6-23 age group were affirming (in a new way) their cultural antecedents. In so doing, they were "desafiando" (denying and/or defying) the cultural ideolgoy of the U. s. capitalist system which seeks to "convince" (national) minorities that they are not, and should not, see themselves as different from white, middle-class America.

Further, the reactions elicited by Menudo in Hispanic communties showed that, despite the economic oppression in which most women and men find themselves, there is strength. There are resources. These resources were displayed by the quickly mobilized, energized mini-Menudo groups. These resources were also personified (to the Hispanic community) by the talent and (what can only be called in today's new language) "FRESH" quality of Menudo.

MENUDO AND OTHER TEEN IDOLS

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Before proceding on to a discussion of the economic basis for Menudo, it is important to pause and contrast Menudo with other similar teen crazes. Menudo differed from other teen crazes like the Beatles, Elvis, Michael Jackson and Prince in that:

(1) it was originally (and successfully) a totally foreign (i. e., Spanish) language production;

(2) it spread (originally) without formal networks, i. e., wihout the aid of "mainstream media" channels;

(3) it had an appeal to Hispanic identity;

(4) it appealed to Hispanics in the U. S. and In Latin and Central America at the same time -- making Noriega's conception of Hispanics as the majority population in the hemishpere a sonic reality;

(5) and lastly, and perhaps most importantly, it produced an active, as opposed to a passive response amongst its Hispanic fans.

On the other hand, Menudo is very similar to other popular music groups in that they all reflect a process of capital accumulation and economic exploitation. Menudo is also similar in that it used the advanced "means of cultural production" available today, e. g., television via satellite, videos, films, soap opera formats, electronic recording gimmicks, high voltage sound concerts, etc. to create a commodity that was very successfully sold. Menudo was, in these regards, very similar to other commodities that have become part of popular culture.

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MENUDO AS A COMMODITY

Menudo was clearly the trigger for the changes noted above. But it is important to bear in mind that it was the process of capital accumulation and economic exploitation that made it possible for Menudo to become a part of popular culture. Further, that Menudo's success would not have been enough (by itself) to warrant mainstream media attention. Menudo had to impress upon mainstream media its ability to extract surplus value, i. e, to make money.

This point seems harsh but eminently clear when we look at more typical (but opposing) examples. The Puerto Rican Day parade has been a huge success, in terms of numbers attending, for over 25 years.(8) Yet, it has consistently received minimal mainstream media attention. Similarly the electric boogey, rapping and break dancing received minimal media attention until they became commodities. Other latin music fads and developments, e. g., Salsoul, the boogaloo, latin jazz, the pachanga and charanga received minimal, or no, mainstream media attention. This despite their popularity amongst young Hispanic men and women.

Menudo, however, was making money -- a lot of it. This was brought home particularly by the English-dominant media who marveled at the fact that the group could gross $21 million in such a short period of time. (9) Indeed, the attention given to the marketing apparatus that created Menudo received almost as much attention as the creation itself.(10) This was particularly true in the Spanish-language media where Menudo's director, Edgardo Diaz, was interviewed almost as often as the Menudo stars.

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Paquito Cordero, head of Padosa (the Menudo production company), also received eminent billing. The English-language media interviewed these behind-the-scenes personnel less than the Spanish media did, but was in many ways more intrigued with the financial success of the business enterprise. Why was there so much emphasis given to the "business" of Menudo? This seemed to be a departure from the way in which mainstream media handled similar successful acts.

Attention to the gross revenues of Menudo may have been due to the "outsider" factor, i. e., representatives of new, generally absent/excluded groups receive greater scrutiny -- particularly in areas that are personal or behind-the-scenes. (This factor was most recently apparent in the media coverage of the Geraldine Ferraro and Jesse Jackson campaigns.) What made Menudo different from all other Hispanic groups was that it was perceived as capable of making more money, generating greater surplus value through the exploitation of new markets. A number of factors accounted for this perception.

The Hispanic population in the U. S. had grown by over 60% between 1970-80. Numerous projections on continued growth were made, there was general agreement that Hispanics would soon become the largest minority group in the U. S. The Hispanic market in the U. S. was virgin territory, young, unexplored and fertile. Developing the Hispanic market in the U. S. was also seen as a gateway to Central an Latin American markets. Menudo, a Puerto Rican group, with strong appeal to Hispanic communities throughout the U. S. and Central and Latin America, was the perfect bridge. Menudo, as the first hemispheric group, exemplified the

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possibilities for expansion.(11)

Again, the press chronicled, albeit more circumspectly, the role of economics in promoting Menudo and the search for bigger markets. On August 8, 1983, U. S. News and World Report wrote "Sellers Rush to Woo Hispanic Customers," and noted that ABC had signed Menudo on for 4 minute spots on Saturday mornings. In late August, after announcing exclusive license rights to Menudo bath products, the president of CCA Industries, said: Menudo is recognized as one of the world's most popular teenage music groups because of its ability to cross cultural boundaries. Now that their records are released in both English and Spanish the market for Menudo products is expected to grow substantially as the group continues to gain acceptance among both cultural groups. On Nov. 23, 1983, the New York Times wrote that the campaign behind Menudo is part of a broader effort by RCA to cultivate the Spanish language market.(12)

But prior to the discovery of Menudo by the English-language world, the Menudo operation itself had used, very effectively, the more advanced means of cultural production to catapult Menudo to stardom and to generate surplus value. The main instruments of production used were: television via satellite -- Menudo had a weekly half hour show that aired both in Puerto Rico and in New York on the Spanish language network. Also a soap opera, starring Menudo, ran in Puerto Rico, in the U. S., and in some Latin American cities. A number of films were made and released in the U. S. and Latin American markets. The record albums and videos made utilized the outlets noted above to "air" their songs. Concerts in the U. S. and Latin America were taped

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and then often came to constitute the content of the weekly shows. Guest spots on English language shows furthered the success of these means. Lastly, Padosa moved to control all profits from the sale of symbolic identity goods, i. e., tee shirts, buttons, etc. Shops selling Menudo goods not controlled by Padosa were ordered to cease such sales.(13)

But perhaps the genius to the Menudo group in terms of maximum economic exploitation was the patenting of Menudo as a commodity with perpetual life. All Menudo participants must leave the group when their voices change (usually by their 15th birthday) and be replaced by a new Menudo. Thus, the group will never age as did the Beatles. Because they can add new members to the group, they can make finite adjustments in their product (i. e., in the Menudo commodity) and meet the exigencies of the market or develop new markets.(14)

The introduction of Robbie, the newest member of the group is just such an adjustment. Robbie was raised in New York and can thus ease the projected transition to a more "bilingual" production, meaning more songs in English, more perforances and sales to more English-dominant audiences and markets. Whether this will succeed or not in the long run remains to be seen. Their first English-language releases were in the top ten charts -- meaning "mucho dinero" again.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Menudo pheonomenon represents a series of dialectical reactions to colonialism and oppression in the U. S.

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Menudo evolved as a synthesis of American rock and traditional Puerto Rican music (with Spanish words and songs). This synthesis was transported from Puerto Rico (the periphery) to New York (the centre) and to other Central and Latin American countries (other peripheral areas) via the modern instruments of cultural production (via satellite TV and other forms of the electronic and print media). The introduction of Menudo to New York triggered (particularly in young Hispanic women) reactions that were antithetical to the cultural hegemony of the U. S. (i. e., increased use of Spanish and increased pride and identification as Hispanics).

The media network of the English-dominant world moved quickly to incorporate and further exploit this new commodity (i. e., Menudo) in large part because it was a money-maker. The corporate backers of Menudo also seized upon the opportunity to further expand the market for their commodity and moved to change the group so that it would appeal more to non-Hispanic households. In turn, the strong appeal Menudo had to Hispanic women appears to be on the wane. Menudo has become bigger but less a part of them.

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FOOTNOTES

1 The following news accounts document "Menudo mania."

Menudo was hailed as "bigger than the Beatles" by Mayor Kock during the summer of 1983, New York Times, I, 29:5.

Menudo set a record in ticket sales at Radio City Music Hall (in February, 1984) -- Associated Press (AP), 8/21/84. Stadiums were also sold out in Mexcio, Peru, Argentina, and Venezuela -- United Press International (UPI), 7/26/83. During their 1983 tour they played to sell-out crowds across the country. Performances in 1984 included New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas and Miami -- UPI, 8/30/84.

Three people were trampled to death when 40,000 fans were leaving a Menudo concert in Puebla, Mexico, AP, 11/3/83.

Newspaper accounts of the popularity of Menudo and of the crowds that gathered whenever Menudo appeared were many. See, for example, The Christian Science Monitor , 12/20/84; the Washington Post , 9/17/84, New York Times , 2/23/83, 2/3/83, II,3:1; 6/12/83, I, 42:4; 6/15/83, II, 4:6; 11/15/83, II,3:2; 11/19/83, I, 29:5; 12/15/83, II, 3:2; 2/19/84, I,2:68, 7/2/84, II,1. and UPI 2/20/84, 9/17/84, 9/4/84; AP, 9/4/84, 11/3/83 .

AP, 11/3/83, estimated 5000 fans were at the airport to meet Menudo.

Menudo signed a contract with Norman Lear and Embassy Productions for up to five pictures and several T. V. productions, New York Times, 7/27/83, III, 18:1. RCA signed a long-term recording contract with Menudo comparable to the company's multimillion dollar agreement with Kenny Rogers and Diana Ross, New York Times, 11/23/83.

2 In this regard, Menudo was the exception for as Elayne Rapping (1983) points out mainstream T. V., or what she calls "home television", is

> ...a massive system of monopolistically controlled networks, integrated with and reflective of the dominant classes in complex and subtle ways....television....is the voice and soul of U. S. power in all its contradictory and dialectical forms and movements. (pp. 28-29)

3 For an analysis of 1980 census data that describes the economically depressed conditions of Hispanic women and Hispanic men in New York State see Rodriguez (1984).

4 Personal observation, 9/28,84, Radio City Music Hall, New York City.

5 Menudo and Michael Jackson dolls were headliners at the 1984 Toy Fair, UPI, 2/21/84.

6 5000 "screaming adolescent girls" flooded Kennedy airport as Menudo arrived (AP, 11/3/83). How did 5000 girls come to know the exact time, place and date of Menudo's arrival?

7 "Citing the craze among young Hispanics for Menudo," Manny Rosa, a special assistant to Bronx State Assemblyman Joe Serrano, credits the Moon orgnization for using this knowledge "to perfection.

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Kids were always picking up the paper...." (Rothmyer, 1984, p. 29)

8 See Rosa Estades (1980) for a description of the origins of the Puerto Rican Day Parade.

9 According to the Washington Post 8 million records have been sold since the group began in 1977. (9/24/84)

10 Indeed, this interest in the buisness/marketing side of Menudo has apparently even impacted on the group itself. For as its founder, Edgardo Diaz said in a recent interview: "It's the group of professionals who have been working on this all the time and who are what makes Menudo possible who really are Menudo." "Menudo: Oooh! It's Puerto Rico's Cuddly Crooners and Their Adoring Teen-Age Throngs," by Alma Guillermoprieto, The Washington Post ,Sept. 24, 1984.

11 Some would argue Menudo went beyond its hemispheric image and became international role models when they were annointed UNICEF's first youth ambassadors. (See The Washington Post , 9/17/84)

12 U. S. News & World Report, 8/8/83, p. 42. and UPI, 8/30/84.

13 "Padosa Productions, Inc. Takes Legal Steps To Protect Its 25 Authorized Products," The National Law Journal, Aug., 1983, p. 2.

14 It is possible that this very changeability may cause Menudo to lose its most ardent, (cathartic?) Hispanic fans.

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